



## EDITOR • MARCH 2010

The third annual UCCE Grafting and Scion Swap was a rich success. We invited seasoned working experts to teach, and more importantly, to give one-on-one hands-on assistance as more than 150 apple and pear trees were born to populate Marin County and beyond. Mike and Sally Gale of Chileno Valley Ranch, once again the workshop hosts, opened their beautiful ranch and apple orchard to the participants.

The workshop was assisted by our two new interns, Bonnie Nielsen and Jenna Brager, who were grafted into the UCCE Marin operation from Conservation Corp North Bay and Indian Valley College. Jenna is already on the editorial staff here and contributed the lead article on the grafting workshop. Bonnie has begun organizing an exciting new project that UCCE and its partners are about to reveal. (See back page for a hint.)

Several photos taken by Nina Zhito ([www.ninazhito.com](http://www.ninazhito.com)) at the grafting workshop appear on page 2.

Ellie Rilla, former UCCE Marin County Director, has not been idle during her one-year sabbatical, and it looks like she has spent her time surfing (the internet). She has given us a great summary of what's up with social media marketing. More farmers than you think are getting linked in. -- Steve Quirt, editor



## Third UCCE Grafting Workshop & Scion Exchange

February was full of productive workshops. During mid-February's Pruning Workshop at Chileno Valley Ranch, eager participants harvested scions while pruning Mike and Sally Gale's unique varieties of apple and pear trees. (Scion is a detached new shoot or twig containing buds from a woody plant.) Just one week later in February, these scions, along with added varieties brought by attendees, were used for UCCE's 3rd Annual Grafting and Pruning Workshop, again at pastoral Chileno Valley Ranch.

About 30 workshop participants gathered in the Gales' barn with four local experts for presentations, demonstrations, and hands-on grafting to generate more than 150 new apple and pear trees. Paul Vossen, Pomologist, Small Farm Expert, and UCCE Farm Advisor, demonstrated grafting techniques, explained differences between rootstocks, and taught about variables in seasonal pruning. John Valenzuela, horticulturist and permaculture educator, detailed more grafting methods with important safety reminders and directed us to books and other resources on grafting and fruit trees. Patrick Lynch, a Sonoma County expert in permaculture, biodynamics, organic gardening and orcharding, presented information on how to choose our fruit tree varieties wisely. Skip Kimura, horticulturist and garden designer/coach, instructed on the aftercare of our grafted trees.

The workshop day offered a wonderful and rare opportunity to have such a diversity of unique tree varieties. Scions were spread out on multitudes of hay bales in the barn, representing at least 60 different varieties of apple and pear trees. What a treasure chest for grafters to choose from!

All presenters were rich with pertinent information and stayed to coach participants during hands-on grafting activities. Each participant went home with as many fruit trees as they could graft. In addition, participants grafted 40 trees for a new orchard at the Indian Valley Organic Farm and Garden at the College of Marin.

--Jenna Brager, UCCE Intern

**2010 UCCE Grafting Workshop**

Hostess Sally Gale of Chileno Valley Ranch displays apple grafts from the workshop.



Expert Skip Kimura shows Wendy Johnson and Justine from Green Gulch a grafting secret.

Sally watches UCCE Intern Jenna Brager executing the difficult whip n' tongue graft.



Simple graft

Will Scott puts his tools away.

**Photography thanks to Nina Zhito for these excellent images. Visit [www.ninazhito.com/](http://www.ninazhito.com/)**



**New UCCE Marin interns connect partnership circle**

Jenna Brager (left in photo) and Bonnie Nielsen (right in photo) started work at UCCE Marin in February. Both women come from the Indian Valley College and Conservation Corps North Bay Student Work/Study Farm Program of the IVC Organic Farm. They are also former students at the innovative Organic Farming class, now in its third semester at the college.

Four years ago, an unusual and highly successful partnership was formed to facilitate the implementation of the new organic farm on campus, a new organic farming program through the college, a work/study program for Conservation Corps North Bay members, and an ongoing education program for the UCCE Master Gardeners. Ellie Rilla, then County Director for Cooperative Extension, Nanda Schorske, Dean of Indian Valley College, and Marilee Eckert, Executive Director for Conservation Corps North Bay, put the partnership together. *"We really wanted to be a true partnership, and to offer young people a way to move into professional life through the combined efforts of the three organizations,"* stated Nanda Schorske.

Bonnie Nielsen joined the Conservation Corps in 2009 and was assigned to work on the then just-developing farm project. Her enthusiasm led to her enrollment in the second semester of the extremely popular "Introduction to Organic Farming" class taught by the Master Horticulturist Wendy Johnson, and also attended by Jenna Brager, a talented young woman with a deep and serious passion for organic living. Both women went on to become farmers in the CCNB Work/Study Program, and eventually ended up splitting their time at UCCE Marin in Novato, helping with workshops, newsletters, and taking a major role in planning the 2010 Agriculture Summit in November.

This kind of collaboration is rare, with three important public service organizations coming together to educate, train, and prepare talented young people to assume the reins of leadership for the next decade.

## Using social media to promote your products (& philosophy)

A decade ago having a website was encouraged but not an absolute necessity. Facebook and Twitter didn't exist and Google™ was smaller than Yahoo.

Flash forward to 2010. What do you need today if you are direct-marketing your farm products and services to your customers? Social media networks and customer-friendly websites are two examples of “must have” promotional tools for your farm or ranch.

Marin's producers are using these tools to their advantage. Blogging from your website or Facebook is one way to keep your fans and customers connected to you. Loren Poncia from Stemple Creek Ranch is a daily blogger. He and his family raise organic, grass-fed beef and all-natural lamb on organic pastureland near Tomales. Loren now manages the ranch with his dad Al, who if you asked him what blogging



was, would probably say “*is that a new board game?*” Generational preferences count! Their website is synced with Facebook and Twitter so you can get there from either direction.

Use the shop function on Facebook to create an ifan-store if you plan to ship or sell products by mail. Michael, the store manager for Cowgirl Creamery, comments, “*Using Facebook, we are interacting with our customers/fans in a much more direct and immediate manner. And from a purely commercial standpoint we are able to keep them informed on our latest products, specials, and events. By posting about a variety of subjects related to other cheese-makers, artisan cheese in general, and sustainable agriculture, we are furthering content that supports Cowgirl and the issues we think are important to our business.*”

Gather your customer email addresses (with their approval of course) and ask them to sign on as a fan at Facebook or from your website where you can gather great

reviews of your products. Tripadvisor ([www.TripAdvisor.com](http://www.TripAdvisor.com)) is used by one out of every four travelers. Check to see if your place of sale (farmers market, farm) is there and ask a customer to add and rate you. Some operators have experimented with online sales via Craigslist. Julie and Tony Rossotti at Rossotti Ranch decided to try it out but reported that, “*We haven't had much luck with Craigslist. We mainly posted on it hoping we might get a response, but usually don't. We sell most of our meat goats through the Bay Area Meat CSA website (bamcsa.ning.com) or to dinner and tour guests to our farm.*”

Chileno Valley Ranch uses [www.pickyourown.org/](http://www.pickyourown.org/) to market their fall apple crop and has found it to be very successful in bringing customers to their ranch. This online directory, while not



fancy, comes up first no matter what you type in for your search. If your talents lie closer to the land you farm and ranch, and you don't have a son or daughter or employee who uses these free promotional tools, look for an intern who can help you set these up. Facebook is easy to use and might be the perfect place to start.

Use Google™ alerts to track what the media and others are saying about you. It's a fabulous free clipping service. You can harvest the promotion and comments you find and link or post them on your site. Sign up at <http://www.google.com/intl/en/options/>.

The Oxbow Public Market's January e-newsletter came this week. As I scrolled down to the Hog Island article, I noticed they had linked directly to YouTube to view the Hog Island segment in *Hidden Bounty of Marin*. Any of you can set this up with your websites, Facebook, etc., and simply link to any footage that you or others have taken of your stall, farm, or products. Type your ranch or farm name into YouTube—there might be something there already.

“*The social media revolution is radically changing how direct-marketing farmers communicate with their customers,*” said Michael Straus, founder of Straus Communications ([www.StrausCom.com](http://www.StrausCom.com)) and former VP Marketing of Straus Family Creamery. If you haven't explored any of these tools yet—now is the time.

-- Ellie Rilla, adapted from the second edition of the “*Designing Your Marketing Strategy*” from “*Agritourism & Nature Tourism in California*,” UC ANR Publications, 2010.



## Preparing Marin agriculture for the next decade

Marin's agriculture is a cornerstone of its sustainability. This has not been by accident. Marin ranchers and farmers, the County of Marin, and community-based organizations have helped to develop the strategies and practices of viability and stewardship on Marin's farms and ranches. The 1997 Marin County Agricultural Summit at Walker Creek Ranch, co-sponsored by Supervisor Steve Kinsey, was a critical moment in setting this course. Many recommendations of that summit have been implemented. A period of dynamic and remarkable progress in farming followed the 1997 Summit. A new decade is upon us with fresh challenges and opportunities, in which we can continue as leaders and innovators in sustainable agriculture. Some areas of Marin agriculture have grown and remain stable, while others need attention and creative action. New partners are at the table, and the overall enthusiasm and support for local farming and food systems has expanded markets, interest, and support. Much has been done, yet there is still much to do. Working again with Supervisor Steve Kinsey and our collaborative partners, we are organizing the 2010 Agricultural Summit to refresh our strategy for success of Marin's agriculture, looking toward the next decade. Watch our website, <http://cemarlin.ucdavis.edu>, for information and developments. More on this in the next issue!

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- ∞ **Save the Date - Community Conversation #4** - April 10, 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm, Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station. For more information, go to [www.WestMarinCitizen.com](http://www.WestMarinCitizen.com).
- ∞ **Grazing Livestock and Water Quality: Options and Solutions for California Rangelands** - Tuesday, April 27, 2010, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm, Lucchesi Park Community Center, Petaluma. Go to [www.growninmarin.org](http://www.growninmarin.org) for details or to register.
- ∞ **2010 Sheep Shearing School** - May 3-7 and May 10-14, Hopland Research and Extension Center. Please visit <http://ce-mendocino.ucdavis.edu/> for more info and to register.
- ∞ **College of Marin's IVC Organic Farm** has received the "Project of the Year" award from the **National Corps Network**. The network, an organization representing the nation's 143 service and conservation corps, recognized the farm as an example of a community partnership leading to career development.
- ∞ **Cow Track Ranch** lettuces were served at a **Martha Stewart** wedding and pictured in the anniversary wedding magazine *Martha Stewart*.
- ∞ **Leah Smith** of **Marin Agricultural Institute** and **Marin Farmers Markets** was invited to give a presentation on the development of the **Farm to Fork** local distribution program at the **Western SARE** (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) conference in Visalia December 1-3.
- ∞ **Placer** and **Nevada** counties have published "**2009 Sample Costs to Produce Mixed Vegetables**" (<http://coststudies.ucdavis.edu/files/MixedVegIR09.pdf>).

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